



# **Dowson Primary Academy**

## **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS INFORMATION REPORT**

January 2021

Review Cycle: 3 Years

Date Agreed by Local Governing Body:

Signed Principal:

Signed Chair of Governing Body:

Jenny Garside



### Special Educational Needs Information Report- our 'Local Offer'

The term 'Special Educational Needs (SEN) can sound quite upsetting and frightening to many parents, but it needn't do! A pupil is said to have SEN where their learning difficulty or disability requires 'provision different from or additional to that normally available for pupils of the same age' (Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, DfE 2014). This is a very broad term and includes children with a wide range of additional needs; some that are relatively simple and others that coincide with a disability and are therefore quite complex. At Dowson Primary Academy, children with special educational needs and disabilities of all types are taught within the mainstream classroom environment wherever possible. This includes (but is not restricted to) speech and communication needs, social, emotional and mental health needs and cognition and learning difficulties. This document has been written in the format of 'Frequently Asked Questions' regarding all aspects of Special Educational Needs/Disabilities in order to make it as clear as possible. It has been written in compliance with Section 6 of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2014) and includes all the information specified in Regulation 51 & Schedule 1 of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 as well as Section 69(2) of the Children and Families Act 2014.

Mrs. Jennifer Garside is the Special Educational Needs Coordinator and is responsible for ensuring that the needs of all children with SEN and disabilities are met.

### **FAQ**

#### *How does the school identify if a child has special educational needs and what should I do if I think my child has special educational needs?*

At Dowson we appreciate that every child is an individual and so we use a wide range of strategies to help us identify if a child has SEN. These may include:

- looking at how well your child is doing and how quickly they are making progress from baseline/previous assessment information we have.
- discussions with previous settings such as Nurseries/previous schools and working closely with other professionals such as Health Visitors, as well as meeting with Parents to ascertain if concerns are shared.
- a variety of different screening tools and programs which may help identify any difficulties or provide a good opportunity to monitor changes in children's presentation.
- observing your child in the classroom and supporting teaching staff with ways in which they might be able to help your child.



If you think your child may have SEN, please come in as soon as possible and chat with your child's class teacher or make an appointment to see Mrs. Garside, the SENCo. Usually, we check to see if there are any other reasons that may be contributing to the concerns raised (such as poor attendance or family circumstances such as a bereavement) before deciding if a child has SEN. The SENCo will usually monitor a child for a half term to see if any alterations/intervention that have been put in place have improved the situation. If concerns are still held by either staff or Parents after that time, then the possibility of the child being identified as having SEN will be discussed. It is important to note that Parents have to give permission for their child to be added to the SEN register and are an integral part of the entire process.

### *What is the school's approach to teaching pupils with SEN?*

Dowson believes that the majority of children learn successfully within the classroom when the correct support is put in place for them. Wherever appropriate, children with SEN and disabilities will be taught with their peers and work towards similar objectives from their year group curriculum within each lesson. In order to ensure that as many children as possible 'keep up' and can access their year group curriculum, it may be necessary to teach children in small groups throughout the day to help close any gaps in learning (called an intervention) or to give children the opportunity to revise topics before they move on in class (called a pre-learning session).

In some cases, it may not be appropriate that your child accesses aspects of their year group curriculum and may need a totally individualised approach to each lesson. Where this occurs, staff will endeavour to cater for the child within the classroom and work on similar but more appropriate objectives to their peers. It is your child's class teacher who has the responsibility for ensuring that the provision is appropriate for your child within lessons. Mrs. Garside will oversee that the provision your child has is effective, and she is responsible for making sure that your child makes good progress throughout the year.

### *What kind of support might my child receive?*

Again, this is decided on an individual basis depending on what the difficulties and targets are for your child. We also often work on targets set by other professionals, such as Speech Therapists. It is difficult to generalise how the curriculum might be adapted or made more accessible for your child, but all details will be recorded on



their Pupil Passport, which is shared with you once a term. Examples of support may include:

- group work led by an adult to support work in class or to fill gaps in learning
- sessions with a member of the pastoral team to support social and emotional skills, such as building self-esteem.
- group sessions to work towards targets set by other professionals, such as speaking and listening, physical coordination and memory.
- specialist resources, such as pencil grips and writing slopes, visual timetables and netbooks. Wherever possible, this will be funded through the school notional SEN budget unless more specialist or costly equipment is needed which would require sourcing from elsewhere.
- adaptations to the learning environment, such as changing the layout or displays, seating position in class, use of assistive technologies or the creation of 'chill out' spaces within the classroom.
- an additional adult to support your child at lunchtime/playtimes
- support via an Education, Health and Care Plan (a legal document to support children with the most complex needs that outline their provision and allows access to additional funding and/or resources from the Local Authority.)

The SEN team at Dowson Primary Academy are very experienced and well qualified to support your child. The SENCo holds a Post-Graduate Diploma in Inclusion and SEN and works with a specialist SEN support assistant (Mrs. Taylor Riley) and Miss Stubbs (a KS1 teacher) who are all highly skilled and have an array of qualifications and training in all aspects of SEN and disability. The SEN team work closely with Mrs. Ashley and Mrs. Bradley who support families and children with a range of pastoral issues. The SEN team regularly train all members of staff on areas of SEN, including different intervention strategies to help support children with SEN.

### *How will I know how well my child is doing? How will my child be involved?*

Tracking how well your child is doing is an important part of providing the right support for your child and your family. All children in school work towards short term targets which are provided by their teachers as part of marking and feedback of their work, with some of these being sent home in the form of 'Challenge Cards'. We also set targets within school about progressing through different aspects of the



curriculum. However, we recognise that children with SEN often require a more selective and long term approach to target setting which often includes working on aspects outside of the traditional subjects we teach in school. This may be a 'life skill', such as learning to swim, tie shoelaces, or pay for an item in a shop, or a target which builds their confidence and self-esteem for example.

At the end of each school year, your child's teacher will meet with you to discuss what you would like your child to be able to achieve by the end of the following year. Every child in school takes part in working towards their targets in class, but your child will have the opportunity to express what they would like to be able to do more generally (e.g. tell the time, get dressed independently, tie shoelaces etc). This information will be recorded on a Pupil Passport, and will be formally reviewed three times a year to ensure that your child will meet their targets. This will be discussed with you at Parents' Evening, but you are always welcome to come in and chat with your child's class teacher or the SENCo at any time. It may also be appropriate to have review meetings with a number of professionals if your child's needs are very complex as it allows you to access expertise and information from everybody at the same time, leading to a more streamlined approach to the support your child receives.

### *What happens if my child's progress does not improve?*

It is unusual that children do not make good progress if they have the correct support in place. Every child's progress is continually assessed and recorded four times a year so that the effectiveness of any intervention or help your child is receiving can be monitored (and altered quickly if necessary). This is particularly important as every child is unique and what constitutes good progress for one may not be the case for another. The range of expertise amongst staff at Dowson is vast, and the Principal and SENCo ensure that staff are trained in the relevant areas. If the SENCo feels that school needs further expertise in order to support your child, they will seek your permission to consult with an external agency, such as an Educational Psychologist, Speech Therapist, or Paediatrician for example. Occasionally, it may be appropriate for school to apply for more support, both in terms of finance and provision, from the Local Authority in order to meet your child's needs. This is called an Education, Health and Care Plan and is usually the result of a significant amount of coordinated expertise and provision still being inadequate in meeting the need of the child.



### *What other professionals might work with my child?*

If school felt that more advice is needed from other agencies, we would always seek your permission and ask for your input in the application process (with the exception of child protection cases). Some of the other professionals we often work with are:

- Health Professionals (GP, Speech Therapist, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, School Nurse, Paediatric Consultants)
- Healthy Young Minds (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service)
- Social Care, including Tameside Families Together.
- Educational Psychologists
- Pupil Support Service (supporting difficulties in social communication (e.g. Autistic Spectrum Condition) and Specific Learning Difficulties such as Dyslexia)
- Virtual School (supporting children who are in the care system).
- consulting other highly skilled colleagues across the Enquire Learning Trust

### *Will my child have to do SATs tests and exams? My child is also very anxious about transition- what can you do to help?*

Most children take the SATs at the end of Year 2 and 6. Whilst the ultimate decision is made by the Principal, if parents and school feel that taking the tests would be inappropriate due to a child's ability or mental health difficulty, then a child can be withdrawn. This happens rarely as most children cope well in test situations as a range of access arrangements can be used to support them (e.g. they might have a reader, rest breaks, extra time etc.).

Transition arrangements are extremely flexible and are not limited to children in Year 6! As Dowson is spread over several buildings, some of the things we do include:

- extra visits to their new class/school, including at lunchtimes
- setting up a key adult for your child to 'check in' with
- booklet to take home over the summer with photographs of new adults and places
- dedicated transition lessons with the Inclusion Coordinator for Year 6, as a whole class or in small groups.

Staff also undertake an extensive program of transition, including passing over pupil passports and information regarding every child's learning. Close liaison with your child's previous/new setting is undertaken, including transferring all paperwork. If



your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan then one of the review sessions will be used as a transition meeting and a representative from the new school will be invited.

### *Will my child be able to take part in everything? Will my child miss out on things if they need to be given medicine?*

The school has a separate policy regarding the administration of medicine, but this rarely presents any problem in school as several members of staff are trained to administer a wide range of prescribed medication.

Dowson is an inclusive school and every after school club, residential trip and activity is open to every pupil to ensure that pupils with SEN and disability are not treated less favourably. More detailed information can be found in our Accessibility Plan, which is available on our website. In summary, all our buildings are accessible to people with a full range of disabilities, including those in wheelchairs via ramps, appropriate door and corridor widths, disabled toilet and washing facilities and a range of furniture heights. The Accessibility Plan details how facilities have already been altered to allow pupils with disabilities to fully access all aspects of their education, as well as future plans regarding making access consistent across all the three buildings that make up our premises (in line with paragraph 3 of schedule 10 to the Equality Act 2010). Staff take an individual approach to enable pupils with SEN and disabilities have access to information readily accessible to their peers, but this may include: use of a hearing loop, modified/enlarged work (with support of the Visual Impairment Team at the Local Authority), use of recording devices for instructions, work 'chunked' in to manageable portions or provision of coloured paper or overlays.

Occasionally, your child's needs may mean that school have to complete an additional risk assessment for some activities and if this is the case then you will be consulted directly. In the unlikely event that it is considered unsafe for a child to take part in an activity, then alternative activities which cover the same curriculum will be provided in school.

### *What support is there to support my child's overall wellbeing? Who can I speak to if I need support at home?*

The ethos of the school is that an adult will always make time to speak to children and that there are a variety of ways children can make contact. At Dowson, we are very lucky to have 2 members of staff (Mrs. Ashley and Mrs. Bradley) who support children in school with all aspects of social and emotional health. They also are





involved with families and often attend meetings with lots of different professionals to ensure that families have the support they need at home. They are always available to speak to children and run whole school initiatives in the prevention of bullying (see separate policy).

### *I would like my child to attend Dowson Primary Academy- how can I apply for a place?*

Children with SEN and disability will be subject to the same fair access and admission protocols as all children. This includes children with an Education, Health and Care Plan which names the school being given prioritised access regarding admissions. All children, regardless of SEN or disability, will be measured against the admissions criteria set by the Enquire Learning Trust in a fair and transparent way, including the right to appeal. Parents of children starting Reception or transferring from other schools are encouraged to contact school during the application process and are welcome to meet with the SENCo to ensure that they feel confident in their choices for their child. The Enquire Learning Trust Admissions Policy is available here <https://enquirelearningtrust.org/key-information/admissions> or via the office upon request.

### *What can I do if I am not happy with the support my child is receiving at school?*

Come and talk to us! There are very few problems or worries that we cannot sort out at school if we work together. Please just drop in and have a chat to your child's class teacher or to Mrs. Garside, the SENCo. If you are not happy with the response you receive then please make an appointment to see Mrs. Thornburn, the Principal. If you are still not satisfied with the response, please contact the office and obtain a copy of official complaints procedure, which can also be found here <https://enquirelearningtrust.org/key-information/policies>. You may also wish to contact Parent Partnership, a free organisation who help mediate problems between parents and school.

### *Where can I find further information?*

-come in and chat to Mrs. Garside, our SENCo.

-look at our SEN policy on the school website.

-look at the pages on the Local Authority Website, including details about their Local Offer for children with SEN. <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/localoffer>

-contact IPSEA (Independent Parental Special Educational Advice)  
[www.ipsea.org.uk](http://www.ipsea.org.uk)